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CATCHING SEA-COWS How the Natives Capture Them in South American Rivers.

It was the good fortune of an Enquirer man early last week to run across John G. Gonzales, a native of Venezuela, who for the past ten years has been employed upon an English steamer running up the Magdalena river as far as Honda, at the foot of the Andes. This route is the most convenient to Bogota, the capital of the United States of Colombia. or New Granada, as it is called in some geographies. Among other interesting matters pertaining to the country Mr. Gonzales describes or Dirt Eaters, whose habits and mode of life are something more dve called 'annatte,' and is obtained from a plant. Over the red ground they form a latticework of lines or blocks, with a dot

oil."

tirely?" or hair, giving to the countenance relish it." a sort of human appearance, which accounts for the name sometimes given it by sailors-woman fish-

and more commonly, perhaps, the that it contains." Indians assemble in a large body with their canoes and hunt the On seeing the cowfish resting on generally known among the In-boiled until the oil comes to the

poorly developed, yet it hears and their cabins. sees well, and on the slightest ap- "That's the country for turtles, and as lively as young crickets, proach of danger will dive out of and the mode of catching them is skedaddle over the sand trying to sight. The animal is very timid peculiar. There are two kinds of get to the water. Then the fun and never shows fight, yet some- them in the Orinoco river-the commences. Stark naked boys times in his splashing about he arau and terecay. The former is and girls, alligators, cranes and upsets the cance. Bebut this is the largest, being very nearly a vultures all rush in a heap for nothing to the Ottomac, who is yard across the back, and weigh-these delicacies. It's a sort of free nearly as much of a water bird as ing from fifty to one hundred fight, open to savage, beast, bird the fish itself. When near enough pounds. Shy in their babits, it is and reptile, and all seem equally he takes good aim with his har- no easy thing to capture them, to understand and enjoy it. The poon, which, piercing the animal's They swim with their heads above young Ottomacs seize the lattle body, sticks fast. To the har- water, exposing the soft and fleshy turtles and eat them body, bones, poon a cord is attached with a part of the neck, which is a fine head, tail, and all, requiring no float, and the latter, remaining mark for their arrows tipped, as more cooking than their animal a tribe of savages called Ottomacs, above water, indicates the directhey are, with the deadly poison, competitors. The turtle season tion the fish has taken. When it curare. The terecay is not cap- over, these savages have a grand has wearied of struggling, the In- tured so easily. He floats in the spree. They gorge themselves on than passing strange. They live dian proceeds to hanl in the cord, water completely below the sur-turtle flesh and alligator steeks, on the banks of the Orinoco river, drawing the fish to the side of his face, not exposing a single portion washing it down with oil, manati a short distance above the point canoe. He rarely kills it outright of his body at which the marks- butter and baked mud-pies. They where the river makes its second until it is safely landed in the man could take aim. The Otto- daub themselves all over with great turn to the east. "They are boat, and this he does by driving mac's method of killing them is colored mud and get gloriously a horrid-looking set of people a wooden plug into the creature's ingenious. He aims his arrow not drunk on a species of snuff called when in full dress," he said, "and nostrils. The most curious part at the turtle, but up into the air, niopo, which has a similar effect to their full dress means no dress at of this fishing procedure is the In- the arrow describing a parabolic opium. Then they become quarall. They first give themselves a dian's method of getting the huge curve, and so aimed that it will relsome and want to fight, and priming of red which consists of a fish, which may weigh a thousand fall perpendicularly upon the tur- their mode of pummelling each pounds, into the cance, and his tle, penetrating his thick shell and other is unique. They do not use

method is as original as at is in. piercing his vitals. human being. It has also nails who apportions it out, according comes something uncontrollable. pers-for you cannot call them at the time, or cured, but not by overhanging trees, ready to both like a pair of hands set into the and smoking over a slow fire. This afterward. The alligator has sense body without arms. The fish dried fish thus cured lasts for a enough to watch the turtle lay uses them for creeping along the long time. The alligator's flesh is them in the hot sand and dig them banks of the river, and to assist in similarly cured, though this is up. The white cranes love them,

carrying her young. The lips of an animal that few tribes of even while the black vultures fly in the fish are covered with bristles savages will eat, yet the Ottomacs a dark cloud overhead, ready to swarm down and devour. The "You say they are dirt-eaters?" Indians hide out of sight of the "Yes, sir; and I mean it in its turtles and endeavor to fight off literal sense. You know the the other animals, but this they since it has large mamme, or French traveler, Macroix, who have to manage most carefully, for breasts. It does not look like a explored the sources of the river if anything like a panic occurs the mermaid, if such as fish could ex- Amaxon, found a tribe of Indians entire herd would seek quarters ist. The fish, strange to say, lives so infernally lazy that having for laying elsewhere. The turtles upon grass, which it finds along eaten up all the four-footed ani. generally lay their eggs at night, the banks of the river, and of this mals in their reach, including par. for then the horrid black vulture it eats an enormous quantity, usu- rots and monkeys, snakes and is asleep and stupid. Each turtle ally browsing at night, when all is creeping things, were reduced to scoops out a hole of nearly a yard living solely on bugs and insects in diameter and depth, and de-"The season for manati hunting These Ottomacs are fully as bad. posit therein from fifty to one hun or fishing is after the floods, when They live upon mudballs when dred eggs. Then it covers them the waters are falling rapidly. the river is high and fishing ceases. carefully up, smoothing the surface When the inundation is at its It is a sort of unctuous clay of a and trampling it firmly down. height the manati pass ont of the peculiar kind, which they find up- Sometimes, in the flurry and exchannel current of the great river, on the banks of streams. It is citement, several turtles lay in the and, in search of grass finds its soft to the touch, like putty. In same nest, and with their unway into the great lakes and sur its natural state it is of a yellow- wieldy bodies break each others rounding marshes, and remaining ish-gray color, but when hardened eggs. The shells erackle and to browse upon the grasses, is an before the fire it assumes a tinge break, sounding like the roar of a times all the turtles do not arrive on time. Then they seem to lose

easy object captured. Sometimes of red, owing to the oxide of iron cataract on the night air. Some-"Is is nourishing?" "Not in the least. It merely all the fear and timidity that they 'cowfish' in a wholesale manner. fills up-produces a satiety and formerly displayed, and they rush Sometimes the monks who have satisfies the pangs of hunger. I upon shore and in the presence of charge of the Spanish missions have been told by chemists and the Indians proceed to lay their head these hunting expeditions, medical men who have analyzed eggs with the greatest of sang for though it is a mammiferous the little balls into which they roll froid, so great is their desire of animal they find it very conven- it to stow away, that it contained maternity. The Indians call these ient to style it a fish during Lent. nothing nourishing, simply silex 'mad turtles,' and, turning them A camp is formed near shore and and aluminia, with three or four over on their backs, have no diffilarge scaffolds are erected for sun- per cent of lime. They call these culty in catching them. When diving the flesh and skins, and balls poya, and store them up into the turtles have all gone the eggpots and kettles are brought for little pyramids, just as cannon-gathering commences. The ground rending the fat into oil, which is balls are piled in a fort. Each is staked off like an oyster bed, called manati butter. The oil is ball is three or four inches in di- and each tribe works by itself. used in the lamps of the mission ameter. When hungry, he takes The land upon the top of the churches, as well as in cookery, as a ball and softens it by wetting, nests is removed, the canoes drawn it possesses none of the fetid and eats about a pound a day, ashore and the eggs loaded, broken smell peculiar to whale and salt- There is something in the dirt-eat- and pounded and whipped about, Glass and Plated Ware, IMPORTER AND WHOLESALE AND REwater cetacie. 'At the proper ing habit which produces a sort of as if a gigantic omelette were to time the fisherman starts off in his craving for it. I do not think the be made. A certain quantity of cance or dag-out, which is hol- habit is confined exclusively to the water is added and the mixture FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. GENERAL MERCHANDISE lowed out from a single trunk. Ottomacs, but believe that it is poured into large caldrons and

mac paddles toward it, using, heard of a poor class of whites liv- into earthen pots for use and sale. however, the greatest caution, for ing in North Carolina, who, when While the egg-gathering goes on though the fish's organs of sight pressed by hunger, eat the mud some of them are hatched out and and hearing are externally very daubings that hide the chinks in tiny turtles, not any bigger than a

genious. Of course no single "Gathering turtle eggs during kind, but poisoning their fingerperson could lift such an enormous the laying season is both profitable nails with the deadly curare, which in the center of every little weight, so the savage sinks the and fun-affording employment for is one of the most mysterious and square or diamond. Their long canoe below the careass by first the Ottomac. This season occurs speediest of all vegetable poisons, black hair is well oiled with turtle filling the vessel nearly full of wa. in March, when the waters have they proceed to scratch each other. ter, and when he has got his gone down and left the banks In the event of any of this poison "Do they live upon dirt en- freight aboard bailing the ca. bare. Then for weeks before mil- entering the circulatory system, not out with a gourd. The fish lions of turtles are seen either death by spasms ensues in a short "Oh, no. They are passionately thus secured he paddles to the basking in the sun or lazily float- time. And yet this same curare fond of sea-cow, which they call rendezvous with his prize, not ing near the breeding place. As is said by the ablest scientists of manati, because its fins bear a carrying it, however, to his own the sun grows warmer the desire Germany to be the only cure for faint resemblance to the hads of a house, but to that of the chief, of the turtle to deposit its eggs be-hydrophobia." well developed upon the outer to the number of families in the For weeks before the animals can well developed upon the outer to the number of families in the edge of its fins or forearms. It is tribe. The hide of the sea-cow is be seen in a long row in the water, Street, Philadelphia, Pa., says invigorant at invigorant at invigorant at the sea-cow is says in the sea-cow is tribe. a large fish, usually about twelve used for many purposes, both for lifting up their heads and neeks St. Jacobs Oil cured him as if by feet in length, and weighs from coverings to their tents and beds and looking at their intended magic of a most severe rheumatic while five to eight hundred. Its body is to lie down upon. The stratum of nursery, as if to see if all is safe. attack. shatled something like a huge seal, fat, or blubber which lies beneath And it is well that they act so On the Mexican Central Railit has a large, flat rounded tail, is removed to be converted into carefully and with such caution, road tracks are now laid at the set horizontally, which serves the oil, while the flesh, which is es. for turtle eggs are a delicacy that rate of three miles a day. It is bepurpose of a rudder to direct its teemed equal to pork, both in del- are highly esteemed by a number lieved that the road will be comcourse in the water. Behind its leacy and flavor, is cut into thin of animals. The jaguar lurks shoulders appears a pair of flip- slices. This is broiled and eaten upon some of the limbs of the Mexico by the first of May next. fins-which look all the world salting down, but by sun-drying suck the eggs and eat the turtles

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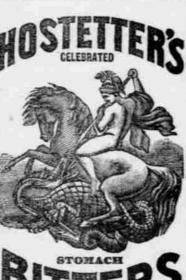
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